

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 240 024

SO 015 392

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TITLE Schools, Religion and Language among German Catholics of St. Peter's Colony, Saskatchewan 1903-1918.
PUB DATE 16 Oct 83
NOTE 31p.; Paper presented at the Conference on the History of Education (Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, October 14-16, 1983).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Historical Materials (060) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Bilingual Education; *Catholics; Catholic Schools; Comparative Education; Curriculum; *Educational History; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; German; Public Education; Religious Education; Teacher Characteristics
IDENTIFIERS *Saskatchewan

ABSTRACT

Flaws in the literature regarding the use of schools by German Roman Catholics in Western Canada as vehicles to perpetuate the German language and Catholic religion are pointed out and corrected. The educational system in St. Peter's colony was not uniform, as portrayed by many scholars, but pluralistic. Three types of schools were in use--two separate, a large number private, but the vast majority public. While some children attended Catholic private schools, most attended the public or separate institutions. The teachers in the schools differed. In private schools, teachers were mainly German-Americans; in public schools they were usually Canadians who had originated in the British Isles. The curriculum in the primary schools varied. Practically all children received religious instruction, but there were wide variations. A minority obtained a substantial amount, the majority anywhere from none to half an hour a day. Finally, bilingual education was not very common. While children in private schools received at least half of their lessons in German, most public school teachers were not fluent in that language. (RM)

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Schools, Religion and Language Among German
Catholics of St. Peter's Colony, Saskatchewan
1903-1918.

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Presented to
The Canadian History of Education Association
and
The History of Education Society (US)
Vancouver, B.C.
October 16, 1983.

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While much has been written on the various groups of people who settled Western Canada, very little of it deals with German Roman Catholics. In addition, works on German Catholics, at least where they discuss schools and their use as vehicles to perpetuate the German language and Catholic religion, are generally incomplete, vague or inaccurate. My research on a large German-American, Catholic settlement in Saskatchewan, St. Peter's Colony, has convinced me that extensive research into local developments can clear up misconceptions and pave the way for more accurate generalizations about these people and what they did respecting primary education. This paper is step in that direction. The method used is as follows. First a series of erroneous, ill-conceived or misleading statements recently made by certain authors is outlined. Weaknesses in the treatment of the subject by a dozen or so other authors are discussed in a footnote. Second, fairly detailed accounts based on primary sources of some aspects of education those authors sought to describe are presented. Third, and quite briefly, documentary evidence leaving little or no doubt that the picture drawn herein is the more accurate one is supplied. The accounts I have constructed are based on the records of over 100 local schools, local English and German language newspapers, interviews, a priest's day books, a nun's diary, and other resources generally left unexploited. The difference between what has been written and what can be written will make the value of researching often easily accessible but seldom explored records readily apparent.

In an article entitled "German Settlements in Saskatchewan," published this year, Alan B. Anderson, after having criticized others for "unqualified and misleading" generalizations makes these and other faulty statements about the school and language situation in St. Peter's Colony for the years preceding 1918. 1. Benedictine monks, the colony's religious leaders, organized at

least fifteen bilingual separate schools. 2. Separate schools, and perhaps he also means private or parochial schools,¹ in the western part of the colony were of poor quality. 3. Public schools were at times bilingual and Catholic like separate schools. 4. Teachers, whether religious or lay and regardless of the type of school they taught in, were in the majority of cases Catholic and if not German at least fluent in German. 5. Beginning in about 1918, this situation was rapidly altered.²

One of the authors Anderson criticized was Kurt Tischler, who in 1978 produced an MA thesis, "The German Canadians in Saskatchewan with Particular Reference to the Language Problem, 1900-1930." Tischler's work like others I cite or could cite has its strong points, but it leaves unanswered questions and can easily lead to incorrect conclusions. He makes such statements as the following. 1. Private schools were established "in districts predominantly settled by Germans. ... there would be no demand for public schools in such districts"³ 2. It "is impossible to give an accurate figure of the number of German private schools in existence by year ... to 1914"⁴ He makes a similar statement regarding separate schools in German settlements. 3. After having spoken of teaching done by Benedictine monks subsequently joined by Ursuline nuns, and the presence of German students in the Regina Normal School, Tischler asserts: "By 1914, then Germans in Saskatchewan had made considerable progress in establishing schools and teacher training centres in an attempt to retain their language and religion while generally at the same time teaching their children English."⁵ "... Before the war the effect of the school system on the loss of the German language was probably minimal. Few solely English-speaking teachers were willing to go into non-English districts"⁶

Among the conclusions about St. Peter's Colony one might draw from the foregoing statements by Tischler are these. 1. There were no disputes among Germans or between them and other residents of the colony or with the government as to the type of school to be established. 2. We cannot know such things as when, where and how many private schools existed in St. Peter's Colony. 3. That being the case, it is highly improbable that we could learn who taught in such schools, what they taught, or when each school ceased to operate. 4. Before World War I, teachers in all three types of schools, public, private and separate, were generally Catholic and of German background.

Space limitations preclude citing other works, but I should mention at least one which deals only peripherally with the subject. Lack of accurate works on German Catholic schools perhaps more than anything else accounts for Marilyn J. Barber recently stating:

German Catholics coming from the United States who spoke English as well as German were able to establish private Roman Catholic bilingual schools in their Saskatchewan Colonies and escape the assimilating force of the public school without attracting attention from educational authorities or from the public until the First World War.⁷

Barber, it seems, would have us believe that prior to 1915 no children of St. Peter's Colony German Catholics attended public or separate schools and that all teachers were bilingual in English and German. Not only that, no one in the province protested the situation. Such was scarcely the case.

To fulfill the purpose of this paper, as good a place as any to begin a discussion of schools in St. Peter's Colony is with the Roman Catholic separate schools. Contrary to Tischler, they can be counted. There were only two, both essentially founded by laymen, not fifteen organized by Benedictines

as Anderson states. One was established at Humboldt in 1907 and the other at Watson in 1910. Let us examine the origin of the one at Humboldt first. But I must point out at once that its birth cannot be adequately described without reference to certain private and public schools which preceded it.

The first school to serve German Catholics in the Humboldt district was a private school. In 1903, the year settlement got under way, Gottlieb Schaeffer opened a store about four miles west of what became Humboldt. At about the same time the Benedictine Fathers chose that site for a mission named St. Bernard's.⁸ In the summer of 1904, one of Schaeffer's daughters taught school there in a tent. Perhaps she opened a temporary school at the behest of Father Chrysostom Hoffman, who had charge of the mission.⁹ However, about all that can really be said of it is that it was set up by German Catholics, was private, and apparently ran for only one term. Later in 1904, the railway passed through the district and Humboldt began to take shape. Schaeffer moved his store to the new community,¹⁰ and St. Bernard's mission was soon abandoned.

By the summer of 1905 a school was clearly needed in the Humboldt area, a number of children having had no schooling for two years. In July a group of rural residents, all Roman Catholics and probably all German, petitioned the government to set up a "Country Public School" which village children could also attend. Not long afterwards, village people, the majority Protestant but with Catholics involved in the leadership, petitioned for establishment of a public school in Humboldt. After some study, the government approved the second request. This brought objections from the first group, who protested that farmers could not afford the higher village school tax. Urban residents were prepared to compromise and delete part but not all of the rural area from their district; some farmers wanted to remain within it. But educational authorities, probably recognizing the urgent need for a

school, advised all parties to proceed with the district as approved.¹¹

Up to this point one can detect no friction of a religious or ethnic nature among the different parties involved. But such tensions would soon arise and become progressively worse.

The government having approved creation of the Humboldt Public School District, ratepayers could now vote on the matter. This they did, casting sixty affirmative and eight negative ballots. The opponents were apparently rural Germans.¹² Next came the election of school trustees. Three Protestants and four German Catholics were nominated. One cannot say with certainty, but one suspects there existed an understanding that both Protestants and Catholics would be elected. But voting closely followed religious lines. Of the seventy-six persons taking part, only three did not vote uniformly for either three Protestant or three Catholic candidates. Since Protestant outnumbered Catholic ratepayers by approximately forty-two to thirty-eight, the result was an all Protestant board.¹³ Needless to say, Humboldt Catholics were upset and promptly disassociated themselves from the public school.

Four days after the election of trustees, some of the same German Catholics who had worked very hard to create the public school district petitioned the government for establishment of a separate school.¹⁴ The request was eventually granted. But before it was, just about everything that could go wrong went wrong.¹⁵ This series of unfortunate developments meant that a school for Humboldt Catholic children, German as well as a few others, was not ready as quickly as originally expected. To deal with the situation as best he could, the local Benedictine priest, Father Rudolph Palm, ran a temporary Catholic private school for two to three months. Two former students state that it was conducted mainly in German.¹⁶ Except

for Miss Schaeffer's school, this appears to have been the only instance when German served as a language of instruction rather than merely a subject of study in a Humboldt school.¹⁷

The origin of the Watson Roman Catholic separate school was similar to yet different from the one at Humboldt. At Watson in July, 1905, a group of settlers, many of them German and a larger number Catholic, successfully petitioned the government to establish a public school. Some months later, they elected trustees, all Catholic and two of them also German.¹⁸ Before a school was opened, however, a second group of people, mainly villagers, petitioned to have the district's boundaries changed. Membership in the two groups overlapped, but the second consisted mainly of non-German, Protestant businessmen.¹⁹ Their request was granted. Consequently, in the spring of 1906 a meeting to approve the altered district was held and new trustees elected. In this election, two of the original trustees ran but were defeated.²⁰ The successful candidates included a German Catholic and two Protestants. The change of trustees produced a split within the community, but it was not a split where all Catholics were on one side and all Protestants on the other. Nor was it one where all Germans and non-Germans were arrayed against each other.

Two interpretations of the split exist. One appeared in the Benedictine's German-language newspaper, the Bote. Here a Watson correspondent alleged that Watson Protestant businessmen unlawfully succeeded in manipulating German settlers and electing a Protestant dominated board. German Catholics, it was said, had not come to the colony to establish non-religious schools. And they were urged to stand up for their rights and demand a separate school as their co-religionists had done at Humboldt.²¹ Such action, however, was legally impossible since Catholics constituted a majority of ratepayers.²²

The second interpretation appears more reasonable. It was provided by the new trustees and signed by thirty-one ratepayers, including some German Catholics. It implied that the dispute was of the sour grapes variety. The letter stated that after the new election, the unsuccessful candidates set about trying to block creation of the public school by refusing to sign certain papers. Those candidates also began calling for a separate school. "Had the election resulted in favour of the other three candidates nominated these committeemen would then no doubt have been ready to sign the papers."²³ There was no reference in the document to differences of a religious or ethnic nature.

One of the most interesting aspects of the whole affair is a statement by the Bote's Watson correspondent about Watson Catholics. Consider it in this light. They formed the majority in the district and under the School Act could demand religious instruction in the public school between 3:30 and 4:00 p.m. He stated that they were willing to tolerate the fact that religious instruction would not be given in the school during school hours but rather would be permitted only twice a week in the school after classes ended.²⁴

After the 1906 dispute simmered down, nothing seems to have been said of a separate school for over three years. Then late in 1909 Watson Catholics returned to the subject. Why the change since they do not appear to have complained about the public school during the interval?²⁵ The answer might be that having become a minority in the district and, consequently, legally entitled to a separate school, they simply decided to set one up.²⁶ They may also have been urged to do so by their religious leaders. But such an explanation may be entirely erroneous. The reason for their decision may lie wholly in local developments. To appreciate that one must

be aware of two things: the nature of the Watson Catholic community and who headed the move for a separate school.

Watson Catholics consisted not only of German Americans but also Irish and other elements.²⁷ And two of the three people taking the lead to create the separate school were of Canadian background.²⁸ With those two facts in mind, consider the following events. In December, 1909, the Watson branch of the Loyal Orange Lodge was founded. Among its charter members was William Allnatt.²⁹ Two weeks later Watson Catholics completed their petition for a separate school. In March, 1910, Mary Palmer, the public school teacher for the past two years, married William Allnatt.³⁰

That the Allnatt-Palmer wedding was to take place was probably common knowledge in Watson at the time the Orange Lodge was founded. Forget about German American Catholics, and simply ask yourself this. How would Canadian Catholics, Irish, German or others, view the prospect of their children being taught by the wife of a prominent local Orangeman? Recalling the activities of the Orange Order in the past twenty years, they would not relish it. And they would realize that Catholics could not by themselves change teachers since they did not control the school board.³¹ The only means by which they could assure themselves of an acceptable teacher was to establish a separate school.

Having examined the origins of the colony's separate schools, as well as public and private schools associated with them, one can draw a number of conclusions, some of which vary considerably from the stereotypes we often encounter. For example, German Catholics frequently did not set up bilingual schools. They were at times prepared to compromise on the matter of religious instruction. They were not always agreed among themselves on the type of school to set up. At times they created temporary private schools,

which were dissolved when they had served their purpose. They evidently did not hesitate to create government-regulated public schools and were prepared to cooperate with Protestants in doing so. When they resorted to establishing separate schools, they may have been responding more to Protestant actions than to their own desires.³² Other generalizations could also be drawn, but keeping in mind that the purpose of this paper is essentially to pave the way for more accurate ones, let us confine ourselves to a single additional one. It is a conclusion I drew in a 1978 article, namely, "that the types of primary educational facilities appearing in the colony were more the product of evolving circumstances than preconceived plans."³³ Subsequent research has obliged me to modify that conclusion only slightly.

What was said in that earlier article will not be repeated here except to summarize portions such as those which contradict statements made by authors cited earlier. Its theme was that a 1916 Anglo-Protestant attack on German Catholic private schools in St. Peter's Colony was based heavily on misinformation. It discussed in some detail the origins of certain private schools, and in a more cursory fashion those of others.³⁴ It would therefore be a misuse of valuable space and time to recount such matters now. The article also demonstrated that in more than one instance German Catholics argued among themselves over schools. In St. Henry's Public School District, for example, a lengthy, bitter debate erupted over substituting a private for a public school. The school was first private, then public, then private again. It showed as well that at about the same time German Catholics at Bruno not only quarrelled among themselves over schools, but also with Protestants and the government. After having set up a private school, they were forced by authorities to establish a public one too. According to Tischler and Barber such clashes did not occur in the pre-war years.

Among other things dealt with in the article were the numbers of each type of school set up during the years before World War I. According to Barber, all schools were bilingual, Catholic and private. According to Tischler, we cannot know how many there were of certain types. Anderson's statements on the subject, by the way, are confusing to say the least. Numbers of schools are also worth examining since other writers at times make potentially highly misleading statements. Lehmann, for example, asserts that German Catholics set up "large numbers of private schools".³⁵ Before adjectives such as "large" or "many" are used some work on quantification should be done. Table I represents such an attempt.

In turning to numbers of schools, it should perhaps be noted, that the approach of this paper changes. Rather than providing further case studies of a specific nature from which generalizations may be made, it deals with matters of a broader type and utilizes a limited amount of statistics. The change in procedure will facilitate the rapid provision of an overall picture of primary education in the colony when supplemented with other information. In addition, it will point out that there are a variety of relatively unexploited sources available to historians who wish to generalize on this or similar subjects.

Table I admittedly has flaws and will be refined by future research. However, one can draw certain tentative conclusions at least from it. It demonstrates that while the first school erected by German Catholics was a private one -- referred to by one of their number as a "temporary school"³⁶ -- they established only approximately eighteen by 1915. Fully half of them appeared in a three year period, 1906 through 1908. About 20 percent of all private schools ever set up operated for only relatively brief intervals and another 20 percent closed during the war years. That the remaining 60 percent

Table I: Schools in the German Catholic Portions of St. Peter's Colony, 1903-1933

Year	Private Schools			Public Schools			Separate Schools	
	<u>Set up</u>	<u>Closed</u>	<u>Operating</u>	<u>Set up</u>	<u>Closed</u>	<u>Operating</u>	<u>Set Up</u>	<u>Operating</u>
1903	1		1					
1904	2 (3)		3	9		2		
1905	1 (4)		4	7 (16)		2		
1906	2 (6)		6	9 (25)		4		
1907	4 (10)	1	9	1 (26)		13	1	1
1908	5 (15)	1	13	7 (33)	1	21		
1909		1	12	11 (44)		28		
1910	2 (17)		14	5 (49)		37	1	2
1911			14			41		
1912			14			42		
1913			14	4 (53)		43		
1914	1 (18)	1	14	5 (58)		50		
1915		2	12	4 (62)		55		
1916	1 (19)		13			58		
1917		1	12	3 (65)		59		
1918		1	11	1 (66)		61		
1919			11	1 (67)		63		
1920			11	1 (68)		63		
1921			11			64		
1922	1 (20)		12			65		
1923		1	11			65		
1924		1	10	1 (69)		66		
1925			10	1 (70)		66		
1926			10	2 (72)		66		
1927		1	9	1 (73)		69		
1928		3	6	2 (75)		71		
1929		1	5			72		
1930		3	2	1 (76)		73		
1931			2	1 (77)		75		
1932		2	0			75		
1933			0			77		2

Note: The Private School column does not include a few very temporary ones such as that at Schaeffer's store. It also excludes a longerlived one, St. Veronica, the existence of which I only recently confirmed. By 1933 there were in the confines of the colony approximately 115 public schools. The 77 included in the table are those where significant numbers of German Catholics resided.

Sources: Public, Separate and Private School files of D. of E., A.S. Information on private schools was also obtained from such sources as newspapers, parish records, Father Chrysostom's day books, and interviews.

disappeared during the decade 1923-1932 raises questions about Anderson's assertion that the war had a profound effect upon them.

While German Catholics were establishing private schools, the table demonstrates that they were setting up even larger numbers of public schools. By 1907 they had more public than private schools in operation and by World War I, over three times as many: fifty to fourteen. In the early years, German Catholics appear to have encountered difficulties in making their public schools function. The reasons for this will be partially explained later in the paper. Suffice for the moment to say that they relate to teachers, living accommodations and finances. And, may I add, those same difficulties explain, at least in part, the rapid increase in the number of private schools between 1906 and 1908. The table also shows that in thirty years German settlers closed only one public school in favor of a private one and that they made very little use of the separate school.

Other points on which all three authors cited err directly or by implication concerns what was taught in the various schools and by whom. Space does not permit a lengthy discussion of subjects taught -- that must be left for a future paper. But a general impression can be supplied in a few words. Of the private schools, Abbot Bruno Doerfler³⁷ had this to say in 1916. The German Catholic ideal was that

children should become true bilingualists in the best sense of the word. ... In them [the private schools] everything was taught which is taught in the rural government schools. Furthermore, the pupils learnt an additional language ³⁸

The bulk of the evidence thus far examined supports his claim. However, it should be added that children were also taught catechism and Bible History

and that two or three schools north-west of Humboldt and another in the Bremen area may have tended more toward German than bilingual instruction.³⁹

At the beginning teachers in these schools were generally colonists: German-American males.⁴⁰ By 1906 females appeared and soon became the majority -- an overwhelming majority, it would seem.⁴¹ These women were at times Canadian⁴² but most often were recruited in the States.⁴³ Some settled permanently in the colony. Others migrated annually from the U.S.⁴⁴ Approximately a decade after settlement began, children of the colonists began appearing as teachers in the private schools.⁴⁵ All these teachers appear to have been German and were no doubt fluent in German.⁴⁶

Where public schools are concerned, let us assume that they generally followed the curriculum laid down by the Department of Education. Only scattered evidence to the contrary has so far turned up. And not only were their teachers certified by the department but their students were examined periodically by departmental inspectors. Of course, catechism was very often also taught. But were the children, as Tischler and others conclude, instructed in both English and German? One approach to answering that question is to determine who their teachers were. Here are three examples going back as far as records appear to exist. St. Bernard's Public School, 1906-1918: James O'Brien, Harriet Murphy, Lawrence Boyle, James Jordan, May Ryan, William McGinn, V. LeVandier, Margaret Quinn, Michael Connors, Francis McGarry, Emmett Crough and Michael Pitzel. St. Benedict Public, 1908-1918: Alphonsus Lannan, Mrs. John Ryan, W. O'Meara, Mary O'Callaghan and Margery Bissett. St. James Public, 1909-1918: W. S. McLennan, Katherine Curtin, Rosalie Howell, Sara Scullin, Katie O'Byrn, Lena Gilhooly, Doris St. Ruth, Minnie Leslie, Anna Hinz and Elizabeth Hinz.⁴⁷

One need not be an expert on names to recognize many of these teachers as Irish, who probably originated in Eastern Canada or the British Isles. So far only a small start has been made in determining where they were born or obtained their first teaching certificates. Of the seven individuals in the above group where such information has come to light, two possessed certificates from Prince Edward Island, one from Nova Scotia, one from Ontario, two from Ireland, and one from Saskatchewan, that particular individual having been born at Portage, Manitoba.⁴⁸ Research has shown only three of the group to have been German: Pitzel who taught in 1918 and the Hinzs who taught 1916 to 1918. Evidence to be presented momentarily suggests that few, perhaps even none, of the others were fluent in German.

It has at times been said that an historian's conclusions are determined by his or her selection of evidence. Provided above was what might be called three vertical samples of teachers selected from a large number of school districts which contained German Catholic settlers. Let us examine what might be called a horizontal sample. You will recall that in 1914 there were fifty public schools operating among St. Peter's Colony German Catholics. According to Anderson and Tischler, very often their teachers were German or fluent in German. But what are the facts? During the course of 1914 fifty-eight people taught in forty-eight of these schools.⁴⁹ Only four are definitely known to have been German.⁵⁰ A list of the remaining fifty-four looks much like participants in a St. Patrick's Day parade. Twenty-one were probably of Irish origin⁵¹ and another five possibly also Irish.⁵² The remainder appear to have been English or Scottish,

except for about five who had either French or Scandinavian names.

From the beginning of St. Peter's Colony, then, the vast majority of public school teachers traced their roots to the British Isles. That the greater portion of them were also Catholic can be demonstrated. But that any significant number of them were fluent in German is extremely doubtful. Consequently, a conclusion to be drawn is that where perpetuation of the German language was concerned prior to or during World War I, the public school had a negative rather than a positive effect in St. Peter's Colony. Not only that, examination of the teachers present refutes the widely held belief expressed by Tischler and others that solely English-speaking teachers avoided non-English districts. That belief simply falls apart when applied to St. Peter's Colony.

Throughout the course of this paper, I have confined myself to pointing out and seeking to correct flaws in literature relating to St. Peter's Colony German Catholics. What has emerged is a more complex school situation than that portrayed by scholars referred to at the beginning. They, to a greater or lesser degree, stressed uniformity, with Barber suggesting existence of a monolithic educational structure. I have shown the educational system to have been in essence pluralistic. Three types of schools were in use; two separate, a larger number of private, but the vast majority public. Those numbers suggest that while some children attended Catholic private schools, most attended state regulated, public or separate institutions. The teachers in the schools differed. In private schools, they were mainly German-American Catholics or children thereof. In the public and separate schools they were usually Canadians who had originated in the British Isles. What children received in the way of a primary education also varied. Soon after the colony was founded, they were, with few

exceptions, evidently taught the curriculum established by provincial authorities. Practically all children also appear to have received religious instruction, but there were wide variations. A minority obtained a substantial amount; the majority anywhere from none to half an hour a day. Finally, bilingual instruction was not very common. While children in private schools received at least half of their lessons in German, public school teachers with few exceptions were not fluent in that language. Bearing in mind such considerations, is it any wonder that when critics attacked the colony's schools during the war years, Premier Scott spoke out in their defence?⁵³

How does one account for the rise of the pluralistic system I have described? Certainly not by restricting our research essentially to accounts by critics of German Catholics and their schools, nor by relying for the most part on those on the other side who spoke broadly on what they referred to as the ideals of the settlers. Rather we must discover what was occurring from the beginning at the grass roots level. When we direct our search there a variety of reasons are soon uncovered, three of which particularly stand out.

The first thing of importance noted is the circumstances German Catholics found themselves in upon settling St. Peter's Colony and how they responded to those circumstances.

The colony was scarcely a year old when Benedictines began publishing their German-language newspaper. The first issue pointed out that settlement had reached the stage where schools could be considered. Existing school laws were explained and establishment of schools discussed. The article stated that most settlers had come to the colony so that their children might obtain a good religious upbringing, something best accomplished in parochial schools. However, it went on, the creation of such schools was impossible for three reasons: the sparse population in some districts, the inability

of settlers to bear all costs, and a lack of teachers. Given these conditions, settlers would have no other choice but to set up "temporary public schools." The government would bear part of the cost of such schools. In them religious instruction could be given during the last half hour of each day. And, while the language of instruction was English, German could also be taught. Finally, the writer stated, the government would be requested to place German on an equal footing with English, a change which would allow for bilingual education.⁵⁴

About five months later, the Bote took up the teacher question. Public school teachers would have to be obtained mainly from Ontario and the eastern provinces, and among them people who could give lessons in German were simply not to be found. Raising money to pay a certified teacher would be difficult. It would be likewise difficult to provide lodgings for teachers because most settlers still lived in log cabins. In view of such circumstances, the best approach to obtaining schools "in the coming year" would be for settlers to set up private ones and hire their own teachers. The paper was of the opinion that in every district there lived settlers with enough knowledge to teach. Or at the very least, there were people in every district who could teach the important things, as well as German and the German Catechism. The government might grant such people temporary or emergency certificates.⁵⁵

These two statements by the Benedictine Fathers in their newspaper help us understand subsequent developments in the area of schools. But they are particularly important in two ways. First, they amounted to the Benedictines giving their blessing not only to private or parochial schools but to public schools, at least on a temporary basis. Secondly, taken together,

they laid out an extremely difficult course for settlers to follow. Colonists were advised to set up temporary private schools, which would be succeeded by temporary public schools, which, teachers being available, could be converted at a later date to bilingual private or parochial schools. While the first two steps were easy, the third was not, and settlers accomplished it only once. The reasons for there being only one such reconversion, however, lay only partly in the difficulty. It also related to the settlers themselves. They did not take the step because many of them simply did not want to. Their reasoning you will understand in a moment.

The second very important matter to note is that St. Peter's Colony German Catholics were not all of one mind when it came to the teaching and using the German language.

The discussion of schools in the first issue of the Bote touched upon the question of how they should be named. It stated that German Protestant Mennonites and French Canadian Catholics would avoid English names and that German Catholics should do likewise. However, the colonists were different. "Unfortunately," said the Bote, "there are many people in our colony who, because of their long stay in the United States, have lost their German heart and spirit, those, who, when they speak with the English try to hide their German nationality."⁵⁶ Would these "many people" insist upon instruction in German in their schools? Would they seek hard and long for German speaking teachers? Would they be willing to finance bilingual private schools which after a time became more costly to operate than public schools? Would they do battle with the government to have German given the same status as English? That they would is highly unlikely and even more unlikely when you consider my final point.

The third important matter to note is that not only did the colony's German Catholics differ on the importance of German, they also had different ideas as to how much religious instruction was required for a child to obtain a proper Catholic upbringing. Nowhere was this better illustrated than when Father Chrysostom led the losing battle to maintain St. Bruno's parochial school as Bruno's one and only school. By the way, there were at the time about three Protestant families in the area. In his day books and in a letter, he recorded the following statements:

First:

Three years ago in Sept. against the wishes of the majority in this district but with the approval of the majority in the parish, I opened the parochial school here 57

Secondly:

Mr. Leinsen told me that not so very long ago some of my (?) friends were trying to get up a petition to have me removed. 58

And thirdly:

Once there is a public school here it will mean no end of trouble for the pastor to keep certain parents from sending their children to it. Many parents do not understand that if a child's religious instruction should amount to anything, it must enter into the child's flesh and blood. It can do that only when all the text books are Catholic and the teacher is Catholic and the children are taught to pray.

Now the public school in Sask. is just a little bit better than in the States. Here where the majority of the ratepayers demand it, catechism may be taught from half past three till four. ... It's this half hour of religion that causes many to favor the public school and makes it difficult to maintain parochial schools. 59

To sum up, circumstances of settlement, differing views on the German language, and divisions of opinion on religious instruction in the schools explain for the most part why a pluralistic educational system arose among St. Peter's Colony German Catholics. It is unfortunate that historians and others describing the colony all too often overlook not one or two but all three of these matters.

FOOTNOTES

¹The terms private and parochial are used interchangeably in this paper. Attempting to draw a distinction between the two might prove useful in a more detailed account of education in the colony but to do so here, in view of the paper's purpose, would if anything create confusion.

²Alan B. Anderson, "German Settlement in Saskatchewan," Roots and Realities among Eastern and Central Europeans, Martin L. Kovacs, ed., (Edmonton, 1983), pp. 175-221. p. 185 reads as follows:

It is difficult to summarize succinctly the actual situation in St. Peter's Colony because of conflicting reports. The Daily Phoenix suggested there were as many as forty-five private schools with 1,200 pupils using German rather than English as the language of instruction; they were established by the church to avoid government control. Prior Bruno countered with his own facts: there were only fifteen private schools, they were all bilingual with ample teaching in English, and all students were expected to be proficient in English. Governmental school inspectors' reports appear to support Prior Bruno. There were some fifteen major separate schools founded by the Benedictines, each with 50-60 students. While these schools hoped to preserve the German language and the Catholic religion, they were bilingual and came up to government expectations; as one report states, "No case has arisen of neglect for the teaching of English." Apparently both religious and secular teachers were employed. While many schools were up-to-date, those in the western part of the colony were reported as overcrowded, ill-equipped, unventilated, and staffed by unqualified teachers. One inspector complained that public schools adhering to government regulations were "practically empty." Some were indistinguishable from the separate schools since they were oriented toward German Catholic traditions and used the German language extensively. It seems safe to conclude that under the Scott government the majority of schools in the colony, separate as well as public, were strongly oriented toward ethno-religious group control.

This situation changed rapidly during the Martin administration (1917-1922). Any tolerance of German language instruction by the British-origin population tended to disappear during the First World War when Canada was at war. A revision to the School Act in 1919 brought the obliteration of German language teaching during school hours and the removal of Catholic symbolism from public schools. Except for some anomalies there was a marked re-orientation of schools in the settlement; separate schools shifted from a strong ethnic and religious identification to an almost exclusively religious one, while public schools moved away from their ethnic link.

³Kurt Tischler, "The German Canadians in Saskatchewan with Particular Reference to the Language Problem, 1900-1930," (unpublished MA thesis, Univ. of Saskatchewan, 1978), p. 31.

⁴ Ibid., p. 33.

⁵ Ibid., p. 38.

⁶ Ibid., p. 39.

⁷ Marilyn J. Barber, "Canadianization Through the Schools of the Prairie Provinces before World War I: The Attitudes and Aims of the English Speaking Majority, "Ethnic Canadians, Culture and Education, Martin L. Kovacs, ed., (Regina, 1978), p. 284.

Other writings on the subject of schools in St. Peter's Colony also generally deal with the subject rather briefly, contain inaccuracies or misleading statements, are written from a critical or defensive standpoint, or fail to take into account the total primary school situation. What follows is a discussion of the greater part of such works.

The first work of consequence on the subject was by Rev. E. H. Oliver, Principal of the Saskatoon Presbyterian Theological College. His September, 1915, speech before the Saskatchewan Public Education League was later printed as The Country School in Non-English Speaking Communities in Saskatchewan, (Saskatoon, N.d.). It consisted of eighteen pages, one and a half of which dealt with schools in the colony. Oliver's inquiry into private schools there involved, for the most part, a one day, forty-five to fifty mile buggy ride to four of them. The situation he described was in some cases accurate but in others not. Moreover, he sought only to outline conditions existing in about 1915.

Oliver's critical comments brought a prompt response from Rev. Bruno Doerfler, the colony's Abbot. In a four page reply, entitled German Schools in the Humboldt District, (Muenster, 1916), Parochial School Folder, St. Peter's Abbey Archives, (hereafter cited as SPAA), he challenged Oliver to prove his charges. His publication also sought to justify bilingual education and to correct inaccuracies appearing in newspapers at the time.

During the next couple of years three works appeared which touched upon the subject. C. B. Sissons, Bilingual Schools in Canada, (Toronto, 1917) contained a few lines referring to private schools in German communities. The motives he supplied for their establishment (p. 164), however, cannot be applied without qualification to St. Peter's Colony.

In 1918 Dr. J. T. M. Anderson produced The Education of the New Canadian, (Toronto). In Ch. XIII (11 pps.) he discussed parochial schools. Unfortunately, over half of his comments are about such schools in the U. S.; he did not specifically discuss those of German Catholics in Saskatchewan. A careful reading of his work suggests that he was less familiar with them than he was with those established by the province's German Mennonites.

Also in 1918 Harold W. Foght completed his study for the Provincial

Government, A Survey of Education in the Province of Saskatchewan, Canada, (Regina). Its one page treatment of schools in St. Peter's Colony is useful in that it supplies the number of private schools in operation, their enrollment, and comments on the quality of their teachers. However, it also contains misleading statements and suffers from a deficiency similar to that found in Anderson's work. Neither of them state that many of the colony's German Catholics came from the U.S. and were fluent in English. Foght described the settlers as "German-Russians and Germans, with a sprinkling of other nationalities." (p. 153) Their American experience certainly influenced what they did in the area of primary education.

The next spate of literature discussing the topic came in the 1930s. First was George M. Weir's work, The Separate School Question in Canada, (Toronto, 1934). Its value arises from an appendix which contains the transcript of a 1916 meeting between Saskatchewan government officials and Orange Lodge delegates where German Catholic private schools were discussed.

Two years later Robert England's The Colonization of Western Canada, (London, 1936), devoted a few pages to the colony (pp. 229-232). Its comments on the establishment of the first school, the arrival of the Ursulines, public schools in later years, and other matters, though brief, are correct.

During the same year C. A. Dawson completed Group Settlement: Ethnic Communities in Western Canada, (Toronto, 1936). It marked an advance over earlier writings in that, while its emphasis was on secularization and Anglicization of the schools, it mentioned how the colonists' American background affected their handling of educational matters, and it discussed simultaneously the establishment of both public and private schools. Its main weaknesses were certain factual errors and, even more so, its brevity.

Researched and written essentially in the 1930s was C. A. Dawson's and Eva R. Younge's Pioneering in the Prairie Provinces: the Social Side of the Settlement Process, (Toronto, 1940). It is, if anything, inferior to Dawson's earlier work. Discussion of schools in the colony is limited to repetition of certain facts presented by Foght and summarizing some of the thoughts Dawson expressed in 1936.

One of the most extensive and best discussions to date of St. Peter's Colony schools appeared in Germany late in the decade: Heinz Lehmann, Das Deutschtum im Westkanada, (Berlin, 1939), in translation to English by Gerhard P. Bassler, Memorial Univ. St. John, Nfld., Ch. X. It deals with the founding, operation and decline of private schools, not only among German Catholics but also among German Lutherans and Mennonites in the three Prairie Provinces. Though Lehmann is weak in explaining the origins of schools in the colony and is of the opinion that teachers were generally fluent in German, his book is well worth examining. It will be very unfortunate if Bassler's translation does not appear in print.

The final item meriting mention to appear in the 1930s was a MA thesis by Albert Moellmann, "The Germans in Canada: Occupational and Social Adjustment of German Immigrants in Canada," (McGill Univ., 1934). Though it makes no mention of separate schools and its treatment of the origin of schools is not without flaws, its discussion of secularization of education in the colony (pp. 104-109) is good.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, with both the colony's and the province's fiftieth anniversaries approaching, and just recently, with their seventy-fifth anniversaries drawing near, a number of local histories were produced. These frequently provide factual data regarding the establishment of various types of schools, who taught in them and so forth. Among them, one in particular merits mention: Rev. Peter Wind-schiegl's Fifty Golden Years 1903-1953, (Muenster, 1954). It is a 223 page history of the colony which includes a number of references to parochial schools by an individual present and involved with them from the beginning.

Among the more recent works which touch upon the topic are two doctoral dissertations. "The Control and Support of Public Education in Rupert's Land and the North-West Territories to 1905 and in Saskatchewan to 1960," by Morley P. Toombs, (Univ. of Minnesota, 1960), is a very detailed study of many aspects of education. Unfortunately, it devotes little space to private schools; and when it refers to those in St. Peter's Colony, Foght's 1918 work is quoted at some length. And like Foght, Toombs refers to the settlers as Russian Germans, no mention of their American background being made.

The second dissertation of recent date is that of Alan B. Anderson, "Assimilation in Bloc Settlements of North-Central Saskatchewan. A Comparative Study of Identity Change Among Seven Ethno-Religious Groups in a Canadian Prairie Province," (Univ. of Saskatchewan, 1972). It repeats almost word for word what Anderson states of the colony's schools in footnote 1 above. However, it contains added comments in a footnote (No. 24, p. 352) which gives evidence of his confusing separate and private schools. Among other things, he lists fifteen separate schools. Only one of the fifteen was separate; the others were private. In the footnote he also singles out a number of public schools in the colony which he says were "strongly oriented to the German Catholics." One was actually within a Ukrainian enclave in the colony. Three others were outside the colony, two of them in essentially Protestant areas. And in some of the remainder, none of the teachers appear to have been of German background until at least 1925.

Since completing his thesis, Kurt Tischler has produced an article, "The Efforts of Germans in Saskatchewan to Retain Their Language before 1914," German Canadian Yearbook, (Toronto, 1981), IV, 42-61. It is a modified version of a chapter in his thesis, and it has the same flaws as those pointed out in the text of this paper. However, it ranks along with Lehmann's and Moellmann's works as the best to date on schools and their uses among German Catholics in St. Peter's Colony.

⁸ Humboldt Journal, The Best of Humboldt, (Humboldt, 1983), p. 3

⁹ St. Peter's Bote, (Muenster), September 10, 1919. See column "Fifteen Years Ago." Father Chrysostom appears to have been the most active Benedictine where establishing parochial schools was concerned. See his Day Books, St. Peter's Abbey Archives.

¹⁰ The Best of Humboldt, p. 4.

¹¹ Department of Education, Public Schools, File No. 1529, Archives of Saskatchewan. See Documents July 3, 1905 to March 1, 1906. Department of Education hereafter cited as D. of E. and Archives of Saskatchewan as A. S.

¹² Poll Book, March 22, 1906, ibid.

¹³ Minutes of First School Meeting, March 22, 1906, ibid.

¹⁴ D. of E., Roman Catholic Separate Schools, File No. 15, A. S. F. Heidgerken to Commissioner of Education, March 26, 1906. Roman Catholic Separate Schools hereafter cited as R. C. S. S.

¹⁵ Documents got lost in the mail. Departmental officials overlooked a promise they had made to act on a certain matter by a specific date. For a time Catholics were refused permission to open their school in a building used as the Catholic Church, the department overlooking the fact that Protestants were using the Presbyterian Church. And a Protestant outbid Catholics for a piece of land upon which they had planned to construct their school. See ibid., 1906-07. Also see Calder Papers, p. 3197, A.S., and St. Peter's Bote, March 7, 1908, p. 8.

¹⁶ Interviews with George Heidgerken and Mrs. Agnes Bauer (nee Flory), Humboldt, April 29, 1978.

¹⁷ German was of course used at least some of the time in the separate school during the last half hour of the day when catechism was taught.

¹⁸ D. of E, Public Schools, 1604. Petition for Formation, July 31, 1905, and Minutes of First School Meeting and Poll Book, November 15, 1905. Trustees elected were Thomas J. Robinson, Joseph Hufnagel and Frank Vossen Jr. Robinson was an Irish Catholic, with perhaps a touch of Scottish in his background. He was born at Prescott, Ontario. At nineteen, he moved to Winnipeg and then to St. Rose du Lac, Manitoba, where he married a Westburn, Manitoba, girl, Anna Elizabeth Shannon, on March 7, 1893. He moved from there to Watson in 1905. See Robinson obituary, Watson Witness, (Watson) December 23, 1932. Also see interviews with Mr. and Mrs. Herb Vossen, Watson Saskatchewan, and with J. A. (Bert) Robinson (son of Thomas), Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, September 13, 1983. The other trustees were German American Catholics.

¹⁹ D. of E., Public Schools, 1604. Department of Education from twelve individuals, January 4, 1906.

²⁰ Ibid., Commissioner of Education from multiple signers, April 28, 1906.

²¹ St Peter's Bote, April 5, 1906, p. 5.

²² When the first steps were taken to set up the public school district, there were twenty-five Catholic and eleven Protestant ratepayers. D. of E., Public Schools, 1604, Petition for Formation, July 31, 1905.

²³ Ibid., Commissioner of Education from multiple signers, April 28, 1906.

²⁴ St. Peter's Bote, April 5, 1906, p. 5. The sentence has been designed to convey as nearly as possible precisely what was said. The German passage reads: "die Katholiken erklärt hatten, dass sie bereit seien zuzugeben, dass während der Schulstunden kein Religiousunterricht erteilt werde, sondern nur zweimal in der Woche der Priester nach der Schule Religiousunterricht erteilen dürfe."

I am indebted to Veronica Garland, graduate student in German at the University of Regina, for her assistance in researching and above all for translating items appearing in the Bote, 1904 through 1918.

²⁵ Examination of Department of Education records, the Watson Witness, the Humboldt Journal and the St. Peter's Bote has so far turned up no criticism. Meanwhile, it is interesting to note that Watson Catholic children along with others went to school in the local Presbyterian church until the public school building was ready for use. Vossen interviews.

²⁶ By late 1909 there were thirty-four Protestant and twenty-seven Catholic ratepayers. D. of E., R. C. S. S., 19, Petition for Formation, January 4, 1910.

²⁷ Included were such names as Peter Sullivan, Mayme Sheridan, J. H. Wilkes, Thomas J. Robinson and J. C. Guittard. Ibid., Minutes of First School Meeting and Poll Book, March 11, 1910. Two years earlier it had been stated that most people in the area were from the U. S., of German, Scandinavian and French origin. Others were from Ontario, Quebec and the British Isles. See Watson Witness, September 13, 1907.

²⁸ The three people signing the Petition for Formation, December 17, 1909, D. of E., R. C. S. S., 19, were Thomas J. Robinson, an Irish Catholic; John Bettin, a German American Catholic colonist; and J. C. (Jake) Guittard, a German Canadian Catholic. Guittard came to Watson from Ontario, perhaps from the vicinity of Nevstadt or Mildmay. In any case, one of his neices, a Merkle, was born at Nevstadt and married Frank Vossen Jr., an early settler at Watson. See obituary, Watson Witness, September 4, 1916. On the other hand, his father died at Mildmay, Ontario in 1903. See his mother's obituary, ibid., February 24, 1922. Such data suggests that he resided in Ontario for some time.

²⁹ Watson Witness, December 3, 1909.

- 30 Ibid., April 1, 1910.
- 31 Mrs. Allnatt reopened the public school later in 1910 and taught for a short time. Ibid., August 18, 1910.
- 32 These conclusions should be treated as examples of generalizations which might be made following a partial examination of the six schools referred to. Examination of a larger sample would result in the qualification of some of them. Approximately 140 schools of all types were set up in the colony between 1903 and 1932.
- 33 Clinton O. White, "Language, Religion, Schools and Politics among German-American, Roman Catholic Settlers in St. Peter's Colony, Saskatchewan, 1903-1916." Study Sessions, Canadian Catholic Historical Society, 45, 1978, 91.
- 34 Those discussed in most detail are St. Bruno's at Bruno and St. Angela's in St. Henry's Public School District. Reference is also made to organizing St. Joseph's at Fulda, St. Boniface at Leofeld, and St. Maurus at Dana. Dates when others were set up are provided and who organized private schools and why they did so is discussed.
- 35 Heinz Lehmann, Das Deutschtum im Westkanada, (Berlin, 1939). In translation to English by Gerhard P. Bassler, Memorial University, St. John, Nfld., Ch. X, p. 12.
- 36 D. of E., Public Schools, 935. Joseph Hanacek to Deputy Commissioner of Education, July 19, 1904.
- 37 By 1916 the Vatican had designated St. Peter's Colony an abbacy. That year Father Bruno was Abbot, the spiritual leader of Catholics, within its confines.
- 38 Bruno Doerfler, German Schools in the Humboldt District, (Muenster, 1916), Parish School Folder, SPAA.
- 39 St. Joseph's at Fulda, St. John's at Willmont and St. Mary's at Bremen.
- 40 Of the four schools established by 1905 the individuals known to have taught in them are: St. Boniface, 1903, Peter Schwinghammer; St. Peter's, 1904 and 1905, Father John Balfrey; St. Joseph's, 1904 and 1905, Henry Kalthoff; and St. Angela's, 1905, Mr. F. X. Strueby.
- 41 A selective survey of the St. Peter's Bote for the years 1906 to 1918 shows females appearing in parochial schools in 1906: Clara Mayer and a Miss Röder. The numbers of males and females respectively identified for each of the remaining years were: 1907, three and four; 1908, five and four; 1909, two and five; 1910, four and six; 1911, three and five; 1912,

one and five; 1913, zero and five; 1914, zero and three; 1915, zero and six; 1916, zero and six; 1917, zero and seven; 1918, two (including a priest in an emergency situation) and three. Not included in these figures are any Ursuline nuns who began teaching in private schools in 1913.

⁴²For example, Winnie Krammer, daughter of a Regina separate school principal.

⁴³The survey mentioned in footnote 41 revealed fifteen teachers with their place of origin shown: Emma Johanning, Laura Meyer and Celestine Meyer, Missouri; Constantia Wagner, John G6rgen, Rosa Zimmeth, Carolina Deustermann, Katharina Diethelm, Julia Diethelm, Karl Warfenberg, Hilda Schwarz, Sofia Kranz and Anna Schwegmann, Minnesota; Agnes Litschauer and Maria Pastors, Wisconsin. Others appearing in the sample are known to the author as coming to the colony from the U.S. to teach.

⁴⁴At least three teachers appear to have returned annually to the U.S., the Diethelms to Victoria, Minn. and Pastors to West Bend, Wisc.

⁴⁵Agnes Kopp and Michael Pitzel in 1911, Pauline Pitzel in 1912, Agnes Flory in 1916, and Maria Michels and Cordula Hermle in 1917.

⁴⁶Numerous people who attended the parochial schools uniformly assured me that their teachers taught partly in German.

⁴⁷D. of E., Public Schools, 1102, 1299 and 1433. The population of these three districts was heavily or almost exclusively German.

⁴⁸P. E. I., McGarry and McGinn; Nova Scotia, Bissett who when married was McCormick; Ontario, O'Meara; Ireland, Ryan and O'Callaghan; Saskatchewan, O'Reilly. See D. of E., Teachers' Register Sheets, A. S. The reason only seven have been identified is that I have so far examined only records of teachers whose last names begin with letters L, M, N, O, P and R.

⁴⁹See data for 1914 in *ibid.*, Public Schools, 935, 1052, 1069, 1102, 1150, 1185, 1187, 1299, 1310, 1353, 1415, 1433, 1434, 1466, 1473, 1476, 1521, 1584, 1587, 1714, 1747, 1770, 1827, 1872, 1959, 1961, 1973, 2058, 2189, 2190, 2192, 2271, 2273, 2329, 2343, 2350, 2375, 2407, 2455, 2568, 2634, 2655, 2695, 2724, 3064, 3073, 3138, 3196. Two districts were not included, Humboldt and Watson, since they both had separate and public schools.

⁵⁰Hilda Schwartz, Clara Kopp, Leo Schumacher and Otto Becker.

⁵¹Patrick Leacy, Mary O'Callaghan, Mary Keegan, Margaret Quinn, Austin McGuigan, Martin Reynolds, J. F. Doyle, Ellie Reynolds, Michael Hanratty, Lawrence Walsh, Mary Scullin, Ruby Sullivan, Margaret Sinnett, Michael Connors, Pearl Hanning, Margaret Walsh, Patrick Dowd, Mary O'Neill, Nora Reynolds, Alice McGeough and Christopher Kiernan.

⁵²Amy Chappel, Ed Crough, Mary Rowan, James Gaynor and Mary Maugan.

- ⁵³ According to a report of a meeting with a Loyal Orange Lodge delegation, January 21, 1916, Premier Walter Scott stated with respect to German Catholic schools: "At Muenster where most of these schools are, English is as well taught as in the public schools. The children going to these schools are children of German-American parentage. The parents speak English very well and their children are taught it. There is no serious problem with them." See Calder Papers, p. 2678.
- ⁵⁴ St. Peter's Bote, February 4, 1904, pp. 1-2. The German words used for temporary public school were "die öffentliche Schule wenigstens vorläufig einzuführen."
- ⁵⁵ Ibid., June 14, 1904, p. 2. The German expressions used for "in the coming year" and "private school" were respectively "dieses kommende Jahr" and "Privat-Schule."
- ⁵⁶ Ibid., February 4, 1904.
- ⁵⁷ Chrysostom to Bertha, October 9, 1909, Correspondence of P. Chrysostom with Sister, SPAA.
- ⁵⁸ Father Chrysostom's Day Books, November 2, 1909.
- ⁵⁹ Chrysostom to Bertha, October 9, 1909.